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IN SECOND BIG CULLING IN 3 MONTHS, DEFENCE MINISTER SHANGFU SACKED

Gen Li Shangfu has not been in public view for the past two months. Foreign minister Qin Gang was the first to be chucked by President Xi Jinping

MORE CHOPPING AND CHANGING IN MINISTRY

Li, who became defence minister during a cabinet reshuffle in March, hasn't been seen since August 29. Xi also removed finance minister Liu Kun and appointed Lan Foan in his place. Lan was expected to take the job after he became the communist party chief of the finance ministry in late September. Besides, minister of science & tech Wang Zhigang was sacked

CHINA PURGES ITS PLA ROCKET FORCE

- While Li was removed from two posts — State Councillor and defence minister, Qin was removed from the position of State Councillor. After sacking Qin, predecessor Wang Yi was reassigned the foreign ministry
- Li's sacking followed a PLA Rocket Force purge as its commander Li Yuchao and political commissar Xu Zhongbo were both replaced | P7

7

MONTHS OF NO-SHOW BY LI SHANGFU BEFORE HE GOT MARCHING ORDERS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

A cart carries Palestinians to an UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) building used as a shelter, in Rafah on Tuesday | AFP

Israeli army not ready for ground assault yet: US

Claims it doesn't have achievable military goals. Can't justify terror at Israel or Mumbai: Blinken

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

EVEN as Israel has delayed its plan to roll tanks into Gaza, its airstrikes on potential Hamas targets in Gaza have continued unabated. Hamas-controlled health ministry officials in Gaza claimed that several hundred people were killed in the past 24 hours.

While the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is finalising its military strategy for the ground offensive, the US thinks the IDF lacks 'achievable military goals' for Gaza, the *Times of Israel* reported. Israel is considering two options: a major ground offensive or a combo operation of surgical strikes-cum-targeted raids by special forces.

According to a *New York Times* report, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has been holding daily deliberations with his Israeli counterpart Yoav Gallant. The US has advised Israel against rushing its ground forces to Gaza, which will take a heavy toll on both sides. Fighting Hamas terrorists, who operate from underground tunnels and densely populated areas, will be risky and the strategy needs to be thought-through, Austin reportedly told Gallant, while adding the ground offensive will be a long-drawn battle.

Addressing the UN Security Council ministerial meeting on the situation in West Asia on Tuesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken drew a parallel between terrorist attacks by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Toiba in Mumbai and by Hamas in Israel. "All acts of terrorism are unlawful and unjustifiable... whether they target people in Nairobi or Bali, Istanbul or Mumbai, New York or Kibbutz Be'eri," he said.

Meanwhile, the situation in Gaza continues to be grim. The World Health Organization said on Tuesday that 46 out of its 72 health care facilities have ceased to function. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees has also warned that it is on the verge of ending operations in the Gaza Strip.

Israel has allowed a few aid trucks to enter Gaza, but it is yet to permit fuel.

In a positive development, Hamas released two more hostages — two elderly Israeli women named Yocheved Lifshitz and Nurit Cooper — on Monday night.

After her release, 85-year-old Yocheved told reporters that she was beaten while being taken away on a bike, and was forced to walk several kilometres on wet ground to reach a network of tunnels that looked like a spider web. P9

No licence to kill: Qatar

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the emir of Qatar, which negotiates with Hamas for the safety of hostages, on Tuesday said Israel can't have an unconditional licence to kill civilians in Gaza

Tourist visa off for Indian arrivals in Lanka

YESHI SELI @New Delhi

SRI Lanka on Tuesday sought to turbocharge its tourist footfalls by making arrivals from seven countries, including India, visa-free. It is a pilot scheme that kicked in with immediate effect and will continue till March 31, 2024. Indians constitute 21% of total tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka.

Currently, many Asian destinations are competing to raise their tourism market, which fell after Covid pandemic. With the objective of reaching 5 million tourists, the Sri Lanka Cabinet decided to waive tourist visa fee for nationals arriving from India, Russia, Thailand, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan.

It means tourists from these countries will get visas when visiting Lanka without a fee.

The announcement appeared timed with the Indian festival season that has already begun. Sri Lanka hopes to rebuild its wrecked economy partially with enhanced tourist inflow, which has the potential to galvanise the allied sectors even without the visa fee revenue.

"Sri Lanka is fully open and reaching out for tourists. India is our priority market and we are targeting three types of tourists – family, entertainment and Ramayana. We are also working out special deals for Indian tourists and are in the process of tying up with low-cost carriers," Sri Lankan Convention Bureau (SLCB) chairman Thisum Jayasurya had said earlier. SLCB had led a delegation to India last year in November for road shows to promote tourism.

The SLCB delegation, led by Jayasurya, held road shows in Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad. "India has always stood strong with Sri Lanka with their boundless love to visit and explore our island. Wonders of our paradise are ready for Indians," Jayasurya had said.

The initial proposal was to issue free tourist visas to arrivals from five countries — India, China, Russia, Thailand and Indonesia.

EXPRESS READ

DKS wants Kanakapura to be part of Bengaluru

Bengaluru: DyCM DK Shivakumar wants his Kanakapura assembly constituency in Ramanagara district to be part of Bengaluru urban district. Shivakumar told people of Kanakapura on Tuesday not to sell their land now as property prices will go up once his constituency is included in Bengaluru urban district | P4

Court grants Sharif bail in three corruption cases

Lahore: Pakistan's Punjab provincial government on Tuesday suspended Nawaz Sharif's seven-year sentence in the Al-Azizia case while two separate courts confirmed his bail in three different corruption cases, in a relief to the former premier after his return from London following four years of self-exile | P9

NADA HABBA ENDS ON A GRAND NOTE

CM Siddaramaiah, scion of erstwhile Mysuru royal family Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, DyCM DK Shivakumar and others offer puja before the start of Jamboo Savari in Mysuru on Tuesday | UDAYASHANKAR S

Bhagwat takes a swipe at woke elements

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @Mumbai

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Tuesday advised people to cast their vote carefully in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections keeping in mind vital issues like the unity and integrity of the country.

Addressing the annual Dusshera rally of the RSS in Nagpur, Bhagwat took a swipe at influential cultural Marxists and woke elements, alleging they are using their influence in the media and academia to spoil the country's education and culture.

"These forces are opposed to all orderliness and morality, beneficence, culture, dignity and restraint in the world. In order for a handful of people to have complete control over the entire human race, they reward, promote and spread anarchy and indiscretion. Their modus involves taking control of the media and academia, and plunging education, culture, politics and social environment into confusion, chaos, and corruption," he said.

Turning to the Manipur conflict, he wondered how hatred erupted in a place that was peaceful for almost a decade. "Which foreign powers may be interested in taking advantage of such unrest and instability in Manipur?" he asked.

Policy won't be revisited despite Agniveer's death in Siachen

MAYANK SINGH @New Delhi

THE death of two Agniveers has reignited the debate on the welfare measures for soldiers serving the Indian Army under the Agniveer scheme. Sources, however, said that the policy won't be revisited. "The policy regarding the induction and the associated benefits concerning the youth serving under the scheme was fixed by the government in June last year and there is no ongoing discussion to bring any changes in them," sources said.

Agniveer (Operator) Gawate Akshay Laxman died in the line of duty in Siachen on October 22. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a post on X said Laxman's family will receive no gratuity, pension or other benefits, adding the Agniveer scheme is an insult to jawans.

On October 11, the Army had faced criticism after Agniveer Amritpal Singh, 19, who died in Jammu, was not accorded a military funeral. The Army later clarified that it was because he died of a self-inflicting wound. Officials said no guard of honour is provided when the death is by suicide.

Regarding Agniveer Laxman, sources in the defence establishment said he will get all the emoluments as per the terms of engagement of Agniveers in the case of demise as a battle casualty. "Accordingly, the next of kin of a deceased battle casualty Agniveer will receive ₹48 lakh non-contributory insurance and ex-gratia of ₹44 lakh," sources said.

Besides, Seva Nidhi contributed by the Agniveer, with equal matching contribution by the government plus interest, will be paid to the family. The next of kin will receive pay for the balance tenure from the date of death, till completion of four years. There would be a contribution from the Armed Forces Battle Casualty Fund as well, sources added.

NIA: IS operative applied for HAL's course to intrude into defence system

YATHIRAJU @Bengaluru

IN a startling revelation, the NIA stated before the Special Court in Bengaluru that the social media accounts and documents collected from HAL revealed that Maaz Muneer Ahmed, an accused in the conspiracy hatched to further the activities of Islamic State (IS), had applied for admission to PG Diploma in Aviation Management (PGDM) at the HAL Management Academy, Bengaluru, as per the direction of his online handler 'Colonel' to intrude into the defence system of India through HAL.

The data collected and analysed by NIA also revealed that Maaz joined the '7 Robotics Online Project-Based Course' at SKYFI Labs and received a Robotics kit. The other accused, Syed Yasin, joined the 'Mobile Robotic Online Course' and received a kit to learn robotics as directed by the 'Colonel'. The revelations were made by the NIA in a statement of objections filed to the bail petitions of Huzair Farhan Baig, 22, who was working as a food delivery boy and Rapido rider from Bengaluru, and Mazin Abdul Rahaman, 22, an engineering graduate from Dakshina Kannada. P4

Conductors issuing inflated tickets for more incentives

AKNISREE KARTHIK @Bengaluru

TO get more incentives, some BMTC conductors under the Shakti scheme are issuing 'zero tickets' to destinations that are ahead of the stops women passengers intend to get down.

For instance, a woman passenger from Majestic to Shivajinagar is issued a ticket to a stop that is ahead of Shivajinagar. This is done because the ticket fare is high and the incentive earned is also high. Bus conductors and drivers together earn an incentive of 3% of the money collected for the tickets issued in a day.

"I board a bus daily from CPRI Main Gate to Balekundri Circle. The ticket is issued for Shivajinagar. The cost to Balekundri Circle is ₹15 while it is ₹20 for Shivajinagar," said Asha, an employee of a private company.

CONTINUED ON: P2

RAJNATH IN TAWANG TO CELEBRATE PUJA

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh performed 'Shastra Puja' in Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang and celebrated Dussehra with soldiers in the region close to China | P7

OBITUARY

Our great game has lost its conscience keeper

CRICKET'S conscience keeper is no more. In one sentence, that's how I will sum up the passing away of Bishan Singh Bedi, my mentor, friend, philosopher and guide. It is an irreparable loss to the cricketing fraternity. The magic has indeed left the building for I personally believe you will never see a player of Bedi's calibre again.

I have so many memories of playing with 'Bishu' as he was known. I learnt a lot from him and strived to incorporate it into my game. In my opinion, he was not only the best spinner in the world but also a great personality. What also set him apart was he was an outstanding thinker of the game. Spending one evening with him was all you needed to get an insight into how he thought about our great game.

I was extra lucky because he was my captain in my debut series against New Zealand in 1976. He did everything in his power to make me feel welcome and was a great motivator of his wards. Lastly, I will be doing a disservice if I don't talk about Bedi's fearlessness. He was utterly and totally fearless. You could almost call him cricket's moral compass for he always knew what was right and what was wrong. He was a very straightforward person and would always call spade a spade. The light will surely be dimmed for his passing is a heavy loss to the fraternity. We have lost an immense man and I send my heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family.

You cannot have another Bedi. Go well.

(As told to Ashok Venugopal)

(Syed Kirmani was a former India wicketkeeper and chairman of the national selection committee. He was part of the 1983 India team that won the World Cup for the first time)

BISHAN SINGH BEDI
SEPT 25, 1946 – OCT 23, 2023

Congress govt in state now wants to rename Vijayapura after Basaveshwara

FIROZ ROZINDAR @Vijayapura

THE Congress government, which renamed Bijapur as Vijayapura in 2014, is apparently in a mood to rename the district again.

Now, the government wants to rename Vijayapura after Basaveshwara, the 12th century social reformer. Basaveshwara was born in Basavanabagewadi taluk of Vijayapura district.

Deputy Commissioner T Bhooblan told TNIE that the government has issued a notification in this regard. The notification reads that the government proposes to rename the district after Basaveshwara, who strove for equality and social justice.

Considering Basaveshwara's contributions, the government wants to rename the district as 'Basaveshwara district' or 'Basava district'. In this regard, the government has sought the opinion of elected representatives, eminent personalities, NGOs and the general public. The government has appealed to the people to share their views within 15 days.

Meanwhile, several leaders, including some from Congress and the Dalit community, and historians said that they will not support the idea of renaming the district again. Calling it unnecessary, they said the government should give priority to the development of the district instead of renaming it.

Opposing the move, Krishna Kolhar Kulkarni, historian, writer and recipient of Rajyotsava Award, said, "There is no need to rename the district again...." P4